

A Further Note on Individualism and Contrastivism: Reply to Sawyer
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Sawyer's expanded argument from knowledge contrastivism to conceptual anti-individualism is now much clearer. As we understand her, the key dialectical move is to distinguish between the positive and negative contrast classes, and apply this distinction to cases of contrastive self-knowledge.

All of this comes together in the section titled "On Anti-Individualism," specifically the third and fourth paragraphs of that section (2014b, 4). According to Sawyer, the preconditions for the possibility of contrastive self-knowledge are

- (i) that the knower, *S*, possess a concept, *C*, that occurs in the proposition she knows;
- (ii) that there be a set of positively contrasting concepts to *C*; and
- (iii) that there be a set of negatively contrasting concepts to *C*.

Sawyer contends that this final precondition, the existence of a negative contrast class, is impossible on an individualist account of concepts. With this, Sawyer believes she has established the conditional that if self-knowledge is contrastive in nature, then conceptual anti-individualism must be true.

We disagree that Sawyer has established any such claim. We concede that Sawyer rightly identifies three preconditions for the possibility of contrastive self-knowledge, but in her response she has only proven that *S cannot have* a set of negatively contrasting concepts on the individualist's account, not the stronger claim that *there cannot be* a set of negatively contrasting concepts on the individualist's account.

As Sawyer points out, although *S* may use the symbol '*C*' to designate the concept she has, she cannot distinguish *C* from the set of negatively contrasting concepts (*NC1*, *NC2*, *NC3*,...). For the individualist, this means that the concept *S* actually has is not the concept *C*, but the broader concept $C \vee NC1 \vee NC2 \vee NC3 \vee \dots$. All of this this establishes that *S* cannot have a set of negatively contrasting concepts for the disjunctive concept she has, because any such concept would be included in the disjunctive concept and therefore would no longer contrast with *S*'s concept.

However, any sane individualist will be committed to the existence of more than one subject. Even if the subject *S* cannot have a set of negatively contrasting concepts, there is no in principle barrier to another subject, *R*, having such a set of concepts. So long as *R* can distinguish at least one set of disjuncts in *S*'s disjunctive concept from another set of disjuncts, *R* will have at least two concepts that are both distinct from *S*'s disjunctive concept and such that *S* cannot distinguish them from *S*'s own disjunctive concept. By Sawyer's own requirements, this means that *R* would have two concepts that negatively contrast with *S*'s concept, and so there would exist a set of negatively contrasting concepts according to the individualist's account. It would be an empirical issue to find an appropriate *R* in any given case, but judging by the sheer number of subjects in existence and their varied discriminatory capacities and behavioral dispositions, the

individualist should be on good ground. Furthermore, even if there were a counterexample where an appropriate R could not be found, it would seem as if an anti-individualist could not pose that counterexample to the individualist without becoming the appropriate R herself.

To clarify this point, let us take a few of Sawyer's examples. First, a simple case with world-directed knowledge. Sawyer poses an example of a woodland tracker (whom we will call Scout) who, on the basis of some observed tracks, knows that a rat passed by (2014, 3). Evidence is positively and negatively contrastive, so Scout's evidence distinguishes rats from deer, otters and badgers but not from rat-track-stampers. Now, contrastives are statements, and statements are posed either *first*, *second*, or *third* personally. Let's look at some in *second* and *third* personal form being posed *to* and *about* Scout. When they are integrated with Sawyer's useful *positive* and *negative* contrast classes, we have four possible statements:

1. Do you, Scout, know these are *rat tracks* and not *deer, otter* or *badger*?
2. Do you, Scout, know these are *rat tracks* and not *rat-track-stamps*?
3. Does Scout know these are *rat tracks* and not *deer, otter* or *badger*?
4. Does Scout know these are *rat tracks* and not *rat-track-stamps*?

Here's the thing. It certainly seems right that all of these statements can be *formulated*, and since evidence to be evidence-for-someone must be positively contrastive, 1 should be meaningfully posed to Scout and 3 and 4 should be able to be meaningfully posed to the appropriate spectators of Scout's performances (specifically, those with the concept of a rat-track-stamper). But it doesn't seem right that for Scout to have the knowledge she has, *she herself* must be able to make sense of the negative contrast in 2.

If Scout simply said, "I have no idea what a *rat-track-stamper* is... I don't know what to say," we would still be able to say contrastive things about her knowledge state, but *she* couldn't. We'd, in fact, say "Scout can't distinguish *rat tracks* from *rat-track-stamps*". *She* doesn't have the concept, but because *we* do, we can make and answer the contrastive question. So there's a negatively contrastive fact about Scout, just one she's not able to formulate. This is important, and notice that Sawyer's emphasis on both positive and negative contrast classes does not answer our challenge of *contrastive statements* (as statements-to) being second and third personal. Once we see this variance, we can see exactly how an individualist can reply to Sawyer's purported counterexamples. Yes, knowledge is contrastive with negative contrast classes, but in cases where the subject in question does not have the concept, the negative contrastives are formulated third personally to audiences who do have the concept in question.

The second case is one of self-knowledge. Let us return to the example of *wanting-or-expecting* from Sawyer's original paper (2014a, 11) and discussed in our reply (2014). Again, Timmy does not have the concept *expects*, but elides cases of expecting with *wants*. Since self-knowledge is question-relative (as established by Sawyer 2014, 8-9), how the questions are formulated and to whom they are posed matters. For sure, one may, as Sawyer notes, pose the question with positive or negative contrasts, but the questions are either posed to Timmy or to spectators of Timmy's performances (perhaps the adults

in the room). By hypothesis, Timmy can positively distinguish his wanting-or-expecting from despising, fearing and missing lollies, but he can't distinguish wanting from expecting them. So there are positive and negative contrasts to draw. Accordingly, there are four possibilities.

1. Second personal, positive contrast:
Do you, Timmy, *want* lollies, or do you *despise* lollies?
2. Second personal, negative contrast:
Do you, Timmy, *want* lollies, or do you *expect* them?
3. Third personal, positive contrast:
Does Timmy *want* or *despise* lollies?
4. Third personal, negative contrast:
Does Timmy *want* or *expect* lollies?

Since Timmy does not have the distinct concept of *expects*, question 2 will flummox him. But as we saw with Scout the tracker, there are still negative contrasts, but they must be drawn in the third person. That there are true statements (or meaningful questions) with negative contrasts is sufficient to establish the contrastivity thesis, but those statements do not need to be formulated by (first personally) or capable of being communicatively successfully posed to (second personally) the subject about whom the contrastive statement is true.

Nothing here must be denied by the individualist. Individualists can accept these phenomena, and hold that attributions of subjects' self-knowledge can negatively contrast with possibilities for which the subject has no concept, without evacuating individualism. How? In exactly the way we can accept that the third personal contrasts can be well-formed about the subject, but the subject herself be unable to make sense of them. That is, just like in the 4-cases with Scout and Timmy. Why is that? Well, because there are many individuals, some of whom have different concepts from others, and they can talk about each other. That's how.

And so the contrastivity of self-knowledge is consistent with individualism. In fact, it's something we think individualists might positively expect—that's how you find that two individuals have different concepts in the first place. Even Sawyer appears to slip into the individualist's way of talking at times. As she says, "The problem, at root, is that the claim that there is a concept *C* that *S* cannot distinguish from *NC1*, *NC2*, or *NC3*, in fact makes sense only if *we* [italics ours] identify the concept *C* independently of *S*'s discriminatory capacities and behavioral dispositions"—where "we" seemingly must be individuals who take up a third-personal perspective relative to *S* (2014b, 4).

Our diagnosis of the dialectical situation, then, is that Sawyer's argument depends on an elision of the fact of the contrastivity of self-knowledge with the requirement that all the contrasts can be made by the knowing subject. That latter requirement seems appropriate in positive contrast cases, but doesn't seem right with negative cases. We've shown that knowledge can nevertheless be third-personally contrastive (particularly with negative contrast classes), but not yield first- or second-personal contrastive statements. As a consequence, the crucial premise for Sawyer's case against individualism is not justified.

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